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2002

Report to the 20th District

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Join Us for A Town Hall

Toll-Free Legislative Hotline: 1-800-562-6000

Dear Friends,

We would like to thank all of you who responded to our legislative survey. Your comments and suggestions strengthen our resolve for reducing wasteful state spending, revitalizing our local economy and, in turn, creating and protecting jobs for your family.

As some of us feared, we are facing a budget shortfall. As of this writing, the plan announced by the governor would leave only \$303 million in the state's rainy day account.

We must control state government spending to make up a \$1.2 billion shortfall in the current budget. In June, the Legislature approved a 2001-03 budget that spent \$650 million more than projected revenue. Combined with a declining economy, this budget could only produce two solutions in 2001-03: raise taxes or cut programs. **We voted against that budget, as it was unsustainable and irresponsible.**

Then came September 11. In addition to the tragic human suffering, the economic fallout further complicated this state's budget shortfall. Now it's January and the governor is proposing raising taxes and cutting programs.

As elected officials and leaders, we must remember the people of the state come first. Together, we must work to protect taxpayers and vital services such as public safety and education. Your leaders must find ways to safeguard the citizens that truly need help, work for a stronger economy, produce and protect jobs.

If each and every member of the Legislature makes the commitment to work together, we can meet these goals. We have made that commitment and hope others will follow our example.

In this newsletter, we will share with you some of the issues we have been working on to prepare for the session that began January 14. Rebuilding our economy to protect you and your family's future tops the list.

We have also included a summary of results from the survey we mailed to you in October.

If you have any other questions, please e-mail me at the numbers listed or call the toll-free Legislative Hotline at 1-800-562-6000. We're honored to serve you and welcome your concerns, comments and questions.

Thank you,

Rep. Richard DeBolt
Republican Floor Leader

Rep. Gary Alexander
State Representative



Rep. Richard DeBolt

Natural Resources Update: Citizen Oversight Priority

The Problem: State Agencies with Too Much Power

A few months ago, a Washington, D.C. newspaper ran a story regarding the state and federal natural resource workers who allegedly planted false samples of Canadian lynx hair in an apparent effort to establish the presence of the endangered animal in the Gifford Pinchot and Wenatchee national forests.

If this act had gone undetected, the false samplings in the lynx study could have ushered in a wide variety of new habitat regulations, ranging from restrictions on skiing and snowshoeing to livestock grazing and logging.

I immediately called for a federal and state investigation into these claims. Those of us who live in rural areas are significantly impacted by environmental findings. We have been forced to meet requirements of the Growth Management Act to the Shorelines Management Act to the Endangered Species Act. **And, now we learn taxpayer-supported workers could have skewed the studies upon which these regulations are based.**

As of this writing, the state and federal workers claim they were “testing the lab” when submitting the false lynx samples. We will find out exactly what happened and the proper penalties will be issued. I am concerned about other surveys that have dramatically affected the value of our property.

The Solution: Legislative Review & Citizen Oversight

This year, I hope to convince my colleagues to study and overhaul the Washington Administrative Code (WAC). These are the rules and regulations that allow state agencies far too much leeway. Gov. Gary Locke, who oversees 28 state agencies, attempted to call for this review. Not all agencies fully complied with the governor’s executive order.

This shows their lack of accountability to elected leaders, and more importantly, the people who pay the bills – the taxpayers of this state. **That’s completely unacceptable!**

A citizens’ panel will be the second portion of my call for a WAC review.

Washington will continue to face obstacles to growth and economic recovery as long as rogue state agencies continue to leave excessive rules on the books with which businesses and citizens must comply at great expense (both time and money). Repealing old rules won’t solve the real problem so long as runaway state agencies continue to over-regulate our state into bankruptcy without any accountability to the people.



Rep. Richard DeBolt served as Floor Leader in 2001 and will continue his duties of leading Republican debate on legislative bills in 2002.

Transportation: Leadership and Responsibility, Not Threats

We recognize and understand the need for solutions to our state’s transportation woes. But, any transportation plan must be put before the voters for approval.

The governor has proposed the same package he tried to force through the Legislature in 2001. Unfortunately, Gov. Locke has also indicated he will put the plan before the Legislature, not the people of Washington. And he will block needed projects in communities of legislators who don’t support his plan.

Each and every citizen who buys gas in Washington pays 23 cents a gallon in gas tax. We will make sure those citizens and their tax dollars are represented regardless of the final vote on any additional transportation-funding plan. **Your state leaders must provide fairness and leadership, not threats.**

Gov. Gary Locke’s statewide proposal includes:

- An incremental 9-cent gas tax hike
- 1.5 percent sales tax on new and used vehicles
- 20 percent gross weight surcharge on trucks
- A gross weight fee on motor homes

This plan **does not protect taxpayers**, as it does not include a reform package to maximize the value of each transportation dollar. Citizens, families and businesses in Washington already feel they are overtaxed and over-regulated. This plan only creates an additional tax burden at a time when many are struggling to make ends meet.

There is no debating that Washington needs continued funding for congestion relief. We take very seriously our responsibility to find ways to stretch the taxes you pay to maximize our investments. **We need to re-evaluate our priorities or the traffic problems plaguing our state will never be solved.**

Rep. Gary Alexander



The Budget 2002: Protecting the Public

Unfortunately, the 2002 executive budget proposal fails to protect the citizens of Washington. It hurts schools, the elderly and poor the most while softening penalties for criminals. This proposal by the governor is simply a starting point for negotiations, and we will not support it as written.

Abandoning Schools and the Needy...

The governor's plan includes reduces funding for K-12 education by \$29 million, including a \$14 million cut in block grants – discretionary money used by schools for what local officials deem to be the greatest need.

Other ways the governor proposes making up for a \$1.2 billion shortfall include:

- Cuts in human services of \$235 million, including eliminating state assistance for disabled citizens;
- A \$35 million cut from nursing homes, as well as a \$34 million reduction in prescription drug assistance to low-income families and citizens on Medicaid; and
- Increases in college tuition

While Protecting Criminals...

To shrink state expenses, the budget also proposes to:

- Let offenders out early (drug and property crime offenders);
- Eliminate their community supervision once they are back on the street. (The Department of Corrections will then define drug and property crime offenders as low-risk);
- Eliminate community supervision for those who have failed to pay court-ordered financial obligations such as restitution to crime victims; and
- Reduce the amount of time they will spend behind bars for a new conviction if they re-offend.

Just recently, news reports indicate meth lab busts in Thurston County reached a record level. And, Lewis County is not far behind. The plague of methamphetamine hurts our community and its future in many ways.

This is not the time to shorten jail sentences for drug crimes and eliminate supervision of recently released offenders.

Yes, we have economic struggles in this state, but the solution is simple: do what working families do when they fall on tough times – establish priorities, control spending and pay for essential needs.

Goals for 2002: Jobs for our Citizens

Rebuilding the economy and providing job opportunities for the 20th District remain my top priority. I also have a number of ideas on ways to make the government work smarter. These are a few of the bills I plan to introduce in January:

- ✓ **Tort Liability:** The state's Tort Claims Task Force proposed changes in our system to protect taxpayers from excessive judgments against the state. As a member of the task force, I plan to introduce these recommendations before the Legislature and pass them into law.
- ✓ **Distribute Initiative Challenges:** Each and every challenge to a statewide law or initiative must now be heard in Thurston County Superior Court. My proposal includes lessening the burden on Thurston County's resources by distributing these issues of statewide significance throughout Washington.
- ✓ **Employee Protection:** A taxpayer-friendly early retirement package for state employees affected by any budget decisions.

Page program offers valuable experience for students

*Ashley Rossow
of Olympia served as
a page in 2001 for
Rep. Gary Alexander,
R-Olympia.*



Young people between the ages of 14 and 17 from across the state come to Olympia to serve as pages for the Washington State House of Representatives. Paging presents students with a unique educational opportunity to participate in the legislative process.

Pages also spend two hours each day of their week-long experience in a classroom setting learning about the legislative process.

Unfortunately, we are limited in the number of pages each lawmaker is allowed to sponsor each year. If you know an eligible student who is interested, you may contact my office for an application or obtain one at the following website:
<http://www.leg.wa.gov/house/hadm/pageform.htm>

Survey Results: What You Want From Your Legislature

Many of you who responded to our October survey listed safety as your top priority. And, you stated the people should have the final say on any new user fees or taxes for transportation in this state.

We agree and will work to protect public safety, education and the most vulnerable in Washington from service cuts. In this time of economic uncertainty, it's unfortunate some lawmakers are resorting to scare tactics and proposing budget cuts that will hurt our most needy citizens.

At right are the complete survey results. Thank you for your response, as your opinions only help us better represent your interests in Olympia.

Survey Results from 20th District:

Your most critical issues facing our state in order of importance are: National Security, Public Schools, Government Over-Regulation, Property Taxes, Transportation, Health Care, State Budget, Business Climate, Energy.

Are certain programs off-limits to budget cuts?

NO 59% YES 41%

Do you support Gov. Gary Locke's transportation proposal?

NO 88% YES 22%

Who should decide on new user fees for transportation?

The people 80% The Legislature 20%

2002 Legislative Information

We will attempt to keep you informed on the issues mentioned in this mailer and others that come before the 2002 Legislature. If you would like to be updated on the happenings in the Legislature, please send a letter or E-mail to either of our offices regarding your interest.

We are allowed to respond to ALL specific, written requests from the citizens of the 20th District.

Thanks, and we hope to hear from you soon



Richard



Gary

Reps. Gary Alexander and Richard DeBolt

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Join Us for A Town Hall Gathering

We would like to talk with you regarding the issues before us in the Legislature. Please join us on Saturday, February 23 for a brief presentation followed by a question and answer session. If you are unable to attend, but would like to comment on the budget or any other issues, please call us at 1-800-562-6000 or e-mail debolt_ri@leg.wa.gov or alexande_ga@leg.wa.gov

Saturday, Feb. 23
at the

Chehalis PUD

321 N.W. Pacific Avenue, Chehalis
10-11:30 a.m.

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